

**THE 4th KING MOSHOESHOE 1 MEMORIAL LECTURE
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TOPIC: HE NEVER LOST A MAJOR BATTLE.

1. Introduction

I am honoured to be here today to deliver this prestigious 7th King Moshoeshoe 1 Memorial Lecture. For that reason, I greet all the people and constituencies who responded to the University's invitation to this Lecture. I would also like to place on record my thanks to the students of the university, the workers, the lecturers and professors and the leadership of the University in all its forms.

There are two other reasons I would like to mention in order to underscore my special feeling of gratitude for the honour of being here today. Firstly, although I have not had a great deal to do with this university over the years, I do not feel foreign to it. My home, where I grew up; the streets where I played and kicked a soccer ball; the schools I attended as a child and teenager; the churches I attended and in which I worshipped, and not least, the girlfriends I had, are all down the road from here!

And so, I am home. I don't feel at home, I **AM** at home. I come from a township famously known as 4/6 Location. Every street in that township has a church, with the exception of one; the only street that does not have a church is my street, where my home is, Matli Street. Historical rumour has it that the name of the township is associated with the struggles of workers during the 1922 strike and the issues of **housing** and **land** that underpinned workers' resistance.

Secondly, this month, September, is holy month in the political calendar of the tradition that I hail from. I am referring here to the Black Consciousness Movement. It is Biko month. Next week on 12 September is the date on which Steven Bantubonke Biko was murdered while in police custody.

He died because he dared to love black people;

he died because he dared to declare the indisputable fact that black people are human;
he died because he raised a movement to wage a political and relentless war in defense of
the dignity and humanity of black people;

he died for the struggle cause to liberate black people in South Africa and black people
everywhere from black colonisation, oppression and exploitation.

His was not a struggle against Apartheid; it was a war against colonialism and racism;
apartheid was simply a local mutation of three hundred years of colonial dispossession,
oppression and exploitation.

In the white world in which black people lived then and now, it is not a foregone conclusion
that black people are **human beings!**

We get it wrong if we simply assume so.

Cornel West, an African American public intellectual, who is a Professor at Princeton and
Harvard Universities, in America, addresses this issue with the poignancy that clarifies why
Biko would not be stopped in his determination to die for the liberation of black people. In
his book, *Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*, (1982), he
dedicates a chapter to a phenomenon he calls: "A Genealogy of Modern Racism". He starts
off the chapter with the words:

*"The notion that black people are human beings is a relatively new discovery in the modern
West. The idea of black equality in beauty, culture, and intellectual capacity remains
problematic and controversial within prestigious halls of learning and sophisticated
intellectual circles. The Afro-American encounter with the modern world has been shaped
first and foremost by the doctrine of white supremacy, which is embodied in institutional
practices and enacted in everyday folkways under varying circumstances and evolving
conditions" (1982:47)*

And so, I am deeply grateful to be on these grounds and in the prestigious halls of learning
at UOFS during the month of September, this year. As we reflect on the life and work of an
indomitable spirit, Morena Moshoeshoe Wa Pele, allow me to draw from one who stood to
defend the contributions of our leadership over the centuries and, insisted that the struggle

for liberation is a continuation of the struggle they started. The vision he projected for us before he was murdered is this:

“We have set out on a quest for true humanity, and somewhere on the distant horizon we can see the glittering prize. Let us march forth with courage and determination, drawing strength from our common plight and our brotherhood/sisterhood. In time, we shall be in a position to bestow upon South Africa the greatest gift possible – a more human face.”
(1978:108)

Armed with this vision, we journey from Biko to Moshoeshoe. Once we shall have accomplished that return to the sources, like Biko did, we shall be able to carve out a space for our questions and the challenges of our time. The road back to the sources and the return to our space and time is underpinned by democratic safeguards whose theoretical foundations were illuminated by Karl Marx in the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. He writes:

“The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped off all superstition in regard to the past. Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to drug themselves concerning their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead. There the phrase went beyond the content; here the content goes beyond the phrase.” (Selected Works, 1968:98)

2. King Moshoeshoe 1.

Bill Humphrey, in an article entitled: 8 Facts about King Moshoeshoe I: The Razor of Southern Africa, provides a list of what he calls:

“Additional claims to fame for King Moshoeshoe:

1. He founded his own all-new clan at age 34. Presumably on the strength of his charisma, diplomatic flair, and cattle-rustling skills. This clan established a settlement in a location that could withstand Zulu assaults. His original clan eventually grew to be Lesotho and environs.

2. He never lost a major battle!

3. He ruled for 48 years against a colonial onslaught. Many native rulers in Africa were unable to maintain such a strong level of sovereignty and control in their domains during the period.

4. He united the various Sotho people into a Basotho nation through a combination of battle followed by compassionate diplomacy (rather than subjugation through conquest).

5. He was very willing to mess with the Boers as they tried to invade. He would give them fair conditions for maintaining peaceful coexistence and then beat them back when they rebelled. Eventually, of course, they took over much of the outlying territories of his realm (as they did in many places). But he never lost control of his home kingdom.

6. He beat the British military and then threw them a bone so they could make peace with dignity.

7. He manipulated various Europeans to get defensive weapons and surprisingly valid foreign policy advice to fight off the settlers. He also used them to help preserve local culture in written form for future generations.

8. He successfully negotiated an intervention by Queen Victoria to preserve Lesotho against all attempts at settler seizure, via protectorate status...

While this did eventually make Lesotho into a colony, it remained separate and intact from British South Africa and Apartheid South Africa both during and after its colonial phase. The monarchy still survives to this day (now in constitutional form) and the Sotho culture endures. Compared to how many of the surrounding areas fared, the decision to pitch a deal to Queen Victoria makes King Moshoeshe I look pretty insightful." (*Arsenal Research*, September, 2014).

I like this summary, only for its convenience. The great life and political pre-eminence of Morena Moshoeshe demand greater depth and width of scholarly work. Be that as it may, there is one that does better than all the ones we have in this summary and the many we should have had but do not, in order to do justice to this staunch character of African history.

I am referring to Fact number 2: "*He never lost a major battle!*"

3. *He never lost a major battle!*

This is the theme of my address today. He build the nation. In doing so, He never lost a major battle! How is that for a politician's KPA – Key Performance Area: Never to lose a major battle!

Listen to a summary of a summary:

- He could withstand Zulu assaults
- He ruled for 48 years against a colonial onslaught
- He was very willing to mess with the Boers as they tried to invade. He would give them fair conditions for maintaining peaceful coexistence and then beat them back when they rebelled
- He beat the British military and then threw them a bone so they could make peace with dignity
- He successfully negotiated an intervention by Queen Victoria to preserve Lesotho against all attempts at settler seizure.

He Never Lost A Major Battle!

He set an impossible bar for political leadership of the future.

Years later, those who were to lead and attempt to build African nations, were to be measured in differing degrees of failure or success relative to the high standard set by Morena Moshoeshoe 1: *He Never Lost A Major Battle!*

Their names, to recall just a few, included:

- Dr. Ntsu Mokhehle, leader of the Basutoland Congress Party
- Sam Nujoma, SWAPO in Namibia
- Kamusa Banda of Malawi
- Dr. Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia
- Samora Machel of Mozambique
- Dr. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania
- Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe of the Pan African Congress of Azania
- Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela of the African National Congress
- Steven Bantu Biko of the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania
- Robert Mugabe, of Zimbabwe
- Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana
- Amilcar Cabral of Guinea Bissau

The list is long.

Of him, we can comfortably confirm with the historians that: *He Never Lost A Major Battle!*

Earlier we just jumped from a vision which Steve Biko committed the BCM to, as their *historical burden*, a vision of the greatest gift ever to be bestowed on the South African nation, the gift of a more human face; we jumped from there back to the political bar set by Morena Moshoeshoe for all subsequent leaders of the African peoples: *Never To Lose A Major Battle!*

Many years later, though, new generations of African activists, revolutionaries, and intellectuals, sought to improve the bar. They articulated new and deeper challenges of the African predicament; they asked new questions.

Claude Ake, a Nigerian intellectual, wrote a book called: *Revolutionary Pressures in Africa*. He concluded the book by posing the question, “Which is Africa’s real choice: Socialism or Barbarism?”

He summarises his analysis by reminding his readers that the contradictions of underdevelopment will persist beyond the date of independence. According to him, the capitalist system that colonialism imposed on Africa will ensure a long drawn-out economic stagnation in the countries of the continent. He insists the contradictions will not be resolved through bread and circuses.

These are his own words:

“Circuses perhaps, but not bread because this would simply not be available. But one thing that would surely be needed in ever increasing quantities in this situation would be repression. As the economic stagnation persisted, the masses would become more wretched and desperate and the contradictions would develop. Wretchedness and desperation would lead peasants to subversion, workers to industrial action, and the lumpen proletariat to robbery and violence. Punitive expeditions would then be sent out to liquidate whole villages, armed robbers would be punished by public executions, and other crimes against property would be dealt with by imposing sanctions of exceptional harshness. Striking workers would be chased by police dogs, locked out, starved out, shot at...So we have a vicious circle promising ever more blood and sweat. It would appear that the choice for Africa is not between capitalism and socialism after all, but between socialism and barbarism. Which will it be?” (1978:107)

But surely, the intellectuals – like Claude Ake -, the new activists, the revolutionaries must have heard of Morena Moshoeshoe 1; they must even have come across writings about his

reputation and his successes! So where did things go wrong? Why Ake's statement sound truthful?

Where did we read Moshoeshoe wrongly? The political text of his leadership is refusing to translate? What did we NOT hear when the The historians told us: *He Never Lost A Major Battle!*

Lets go back to a summary of a summary of a summary:

- He ruled for 48 years
- He was very willing to mess with the Boers
- He beat the British military
- He successfully negotiated an intervention by Queen Victoria

In other words: *He Defended the Land. He Never Lost A Major Battle! And the historically shattering Outcome of that was that he built the Nation. Great Leaders Built Nations.*

As they say in Statistics and Data Science, there is a *complete multicollinearity between building the Nation and defending the Land. Leaders that defend the Land, build the Nation. And leaders that build the Nation, defend the Land.*

Morena Moshoeshoe wa Pele, defended the Land and Build the Nation; He build the Nation and defended the Land. **He Never Lost A Major Battle!**

Many years later, not in Africa, and not about Africa, Daniel Singer, takes us to that land of the famous revolution and memorable slogan, in France. Many will remember the famous slogan: *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*. That was in 1789. King Moshoeshoe was 3 years old then, having been born in 1786. When we hear what Daniel Singer says about this land of revolutions – 1789, 1848-1851 – we understand why even this country and its usual cultural influence could not distract King Moshoeshoe 1. **He Never Lost A Major Battle!**

Singer says about this country:

“ Not so long ago, it was fashionable in left-wing circles to talk of the need to get into the engine room of the capitalist economy and to lay a hand on the commanding levers. The metaphor was both deceptive and instructive. It was not much use and could even be dangerous to maneuver the levers of command differently unless one was ready to overhaul the engines drastically. Mitterand and his comrades demonstrated that one could do better still – enter the engine room in the moment of crisis as a rescue team and, the takeover completed, continue roughly the same course. They showed the socialists of the Western world how to win an electoral battle and lose the political war. (*Is Socialism Doomed? The Meaning of Mitterrand*:285)

Not so with Moshoeshoe. He refused to enter the engine room of the colonialists. He was not going to compromise by accepting the promise of “ an electoral victory and losing the political war”. **He Never Lost A Major Battle! He defended the Land.**

Moshoeshoe’s historic project of ***building the nation, and defending the Land***, already created conceptual and philosophical challenges for some of the great scholars of the world, especially in the western world. For example,

“ Thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf that property emerged out of the interplay between the individual and the state...According to these thinkers, God gave the earth to humanity in common rather than individually. However, *Rethinking the Economics of Land and Housing* page 16 and 52.

Rogue Economics p.192 and 195

Democracy Matters p. 3.